

Student Loan Fund

March 6, 2022

Date of Hearing March 8, 2022

Name of Bill: [S.B. NO.17 - An Act Prohibiting an Institution of Higher Education from Withholding Transcripts.](#)

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

Dear Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

My name is Donnell Durden and I am writing in support of [S.B. NO.17 - An Act Prohibiting an Institution of Higher Education from Withholding Transcripts.](#) I was a college student twice, I graduated high school in 2004 and went to Southern Connecticut State University for two years. I dropped out in 2006 and decided to go back to school more than 10 years later. When I decided to go back to school my options were limited because I couldn't go back to a physical school or campus. I saw that Post University was an online school, and that was pretty much my only option. Before I could enroll at Post I couldn't transfer any of my credits from Southern because I had a bill. I had two years' worth of credits that I couldn't transfer to finish my degree and I was already paying back student debt for those years. I was able to pay back Southern, but it took me a while and slowed me down.

I finally got access to my credits and went back to school in 2018, when I enrolled at Post determined to finish my degree. It was pretty cool and I was getting good grades. Until I got an email that said, I could not enroll anymore because I had a bill. When I asked about the bill they told me that they automatically enrolled me in classes, but I was out of federal financial aid. For two semesters they billed me out of pocket without making any meaningful effort to inform me. I was upset and confused and I had to investigate and figure out what was going on. I never in my life paid out of pocket, so why would they re-enroll me without financial aid and not make it a point to contact me directly beyond an email. What is even more frustrating is that I never consented to be re-enrolled, I guess this practice must not be illegal and they must see the email as a courtesy but that is not right. I am 3 classes away from graduation and I was forced to drop out because the bill was almost \$7,000 and I can't access my transcripts to transfer to try and finish my degree. I can't pay that amount out of pocket, because I am still paying student loans for a degree I did not get to finish.

What is even more confusing is that I must be on a contact list because they keep calling me asking me to re-enroll. They recently called me and I told them I had a bill, but the admissions staff could not find a balance. They finally realized that I had a past due balance and asked me to fill out a new FASFA to see if there was a way for them to apply that aid to the past due amount. After I did it I was told that they could not do that. Why would one person suggest that if it was not true? This left me confused because they first told me that I was out of financial aid, but now they say that they just can't apply the aid to the balance owed. Their lack of internal and external communication is broken and these are not good business practices. Departments give you the wrong information or fail completely to communicate with you about really important financial matters. Why do you want to have people in debt instead of communicating with students transparently? Today I do not know where I stand with federal aid, but I know I cannot register, finish my degree, or transfer.

We need to take action on this issue and you have the opportunity to do so today. I ask that you center Connecticut students and graduates and support SB. NO.17 to protect and support us. I commend the committee for introducing such a necessary bill. We are especially grateful for the leadership of Senator Lesser, Representatives Turco, Paris, and Kavros Degraw on student debt-related issues.

Thank you for your time.

Donnel Durden,
Student Loan Borrower